

Frequently Asked Questions about the Montana Race to the Top Application

- *Will Montana be establishing or changing any rule regarding Charter Schools?*

No Montana already has an administrative rule that speaks to Charter Schools (10.55.604 (2) (a-e)). We have no intention of pursuing any changes to this language or introducing legislation on this issue.

- *If funded, will there be a competitive process for school districts?*

No The requirements of RTTT are such that at least half of the allocation awarded to an SEA must go to participating LEAs and is not to be a competitive process. Our hope is to produce a state plan that is attractive and flexible for all school systems and that they can find a way to use the funds in a meaningful manner to enact innovation and/or implement reform as they see fit within the context of the state plan.

- *Will local collective bargaining agreements have to be changed prior to signing the MOU in order to participate in RTTT?*

No This has been one of the most contentious issues around the nation regarding RTTT. We are committed to developing a plan that will NOT require a local CBA to be opened for any reason regarding teacher evaluation.

- *Will local districts have to adopt the Common Core Standards to participate in RTTT?*

No The role of the BPE is to make decisions regarding adopting, aligning with, or ignoring the Common Core Standards (CCS). The implications for local school systems will be to continue to align their local curricula with state standards set by the BPE.

- *How much more reporting will be added if MT is funded under RTTT?*

As little as possible. We believe that we are already collecting all of the data we will need to write a competitive application.

- *Will any rules need to be changed before the MT RTTT application is submitted?*

No Many states have made efforts to change laws and rules to make their applications appear to be more attractive to the grant reviewers, which apparently did not pay off for them. We will follow our normal course of business when addressing any rule change.

- *Will any BPE rule need to be changed as a result of writing an RTTT application?*

Maybe In particular, we will be exploring ways to increase the size of the teacher application pool across the state by finding ways to be more flexible in licensing teachers and administrators and still maintaining the quality we currently enjoy. Also, we will be looking at a rule change that will be intended to bring greater consistency and expectation to the evaluation of teachers and principals. There will be no statewide evaluation tool or process pursued, only a rule that outlines the broader elements of meaningful and effective evaluation.

- *Has the 'Montana Plan' for RTTT already been written?*

No Although the Governor's Office, the Office of Public Instruction, and the Board of Public Education have discussed their respective interests and positions relative to most of the issues relative to RTTT and future of public education for Montana, the details of a 'Montana Plan' will be put into writing in the coming weeks. This will occur with input from our education partners and stakeholders.

- *When is the state's application due to the Department of Education?*

June 1, 2010 This becomes critical when determining when MOUs need to be back to the state. We have to compile the results of the returned MOUs and enter this information into the application before it is delivered to the Department of Education (ED).

- *When is the MOU due back to the state?*

May 19, 2010, 5:00 p.m. Be sure to return your MOU, complete or not, by email to racetothetop@mt.gov or by fax to 406-444-2893.

- *Why would we sign the MOU now with so few details available?*

To position your district to participate if Montana gets funded. Since the MOU is non-binding we encourage you to get a completed MOU submitted to the state before May 19 so that if Montana is funded you will have the option to participate or not at that time.

- *If MT is funded under RTTT, will the Legislature use this as a way to reduce funding to schools in the next biennium?*

We do not see how. The participation is voluntary and the funding will not be distributed to all schools nor is it based on equitable factors currently used to fund Montana schools.

- *What can the RTTT money be spent on?*

Any activities that relate to carrying out the elements in Exhibit I. Some have looked at Exhibit I and have expressed concerns that there aren't enough details. This has been intentional toward the goal of providing as much flexibility at the local level to carry out the elements of Exhibit I.

- *What is Exhibit II?*

If the Montana RTTT Application is funded, districts that expressed interest in participating in RTTT through submitting a completed MOU by May 19th will be provided a template document to be used to develop their plans around implementation of the elements list in Exhibit I. Each interested district will have 90 days, with technical assistance, to complete Exhibit II which will be the final step of ensuring participation in the Montana RTTT program.

- *Will Exhibit II require 3 signatures?*

No We do strongly encourage the administration of each participating district to engage all stakeholders in developing the plan around Exhibit II.